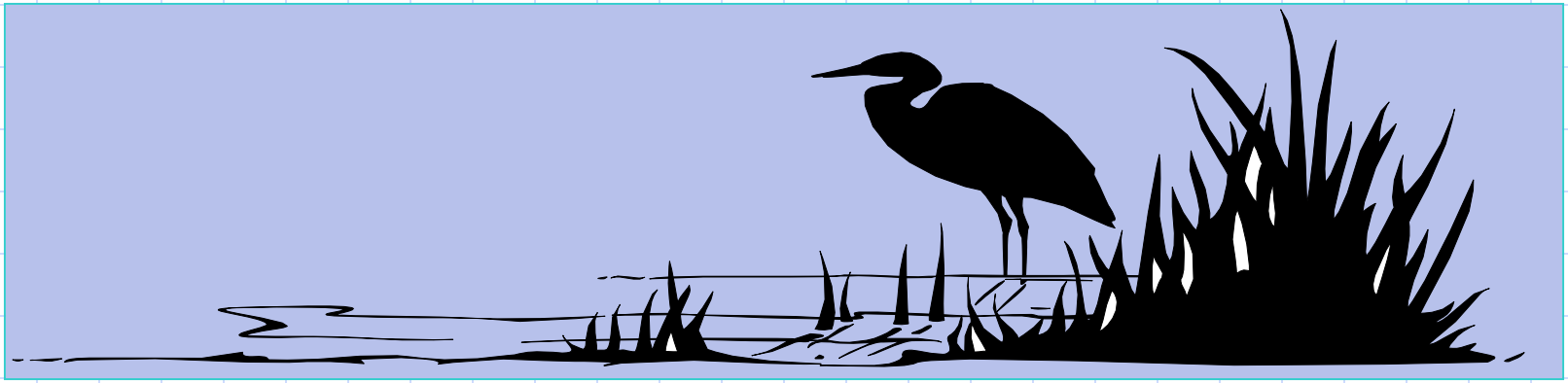
Policy Studies Supporting Civil Works Missions



Policy Studies Supporting Civil Works Missions:

Problems and Issues

PROBLEMS & ISSUES

- PURPOSE and OBJECTIVES
- PROBLEMS and NEEDS
- HQ/IWR ROLES and INTERFACE
- CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

PURPOSE and OBJECTIVES

- Address substantive problems and needs affecting policy management and development

- Determine improvements:
  - to streamline and improve policy management
  - to strengthen role of policy studies in particular

PROBLEMS and NEEDS

- Housekeeping and Backlog
- Legislation
- Responding to Prior Reports and Studies
- The P&G and Environmental Restoration
- Reconciling Federal Flood Hazard Mitigation Programs
- Collaborative Planning
- Budgetary Implications
- Organizational Deficiencies

HOUSEKEEPING & BACKLOG

- Substantial backlog of aging and inconsistent or overlapping Engineer Regulations
- Contradictory or incompatible statements
- Need to consolidate, update and streamline all guidance pertaining to environmental restoration

LEGISLATION

- **Appropriations concerns**
- **Water Resources Development Act of 2007**
  - Delays
  - Confusion

RESPONDING TO PRIOR REPORTS AND STUDIES

- National Challenge
- Strategic Plan
- Revitalization of Corps Projects

NATIONAL CHALLENGE

- **Ten major national challenge areas**
  - ***Marine Transportation System***
  - ***Restoring and Protecting the Environment***
  - ***Managing Watersheds Holistically***
  - ***Floodplain and Coastal Zone Management***
  - ***Responding to Disasters***
  - ***Community Water Infrastructure***
  - ***Regulating Dredge and Fill Activities***
  - ***Recreation***
  - ***Project Processes***
  - ***Institutional Changes***
- **Each involves a multitude of policy issues**

STRATEGIC PLAN

- **Emphasizes *"integrated management at a watershed level."* ??**
- ***"Water resources development and environmental protection are now viewed as an integral whole."* ??**
- ***"Single-purpose missions are not sustainable in an era where adverse environmental impacts must be prevented or mitigated by law."* ??**

STRATEGIC PLAN (Continued)

- **The Strategic Plan also recognized policy inconsistencies among Federal agencies, stating:**
  - ***"Beyond the need to update policies, our critics seek greater consistency among policies across agencies where responsibilities overlap…"***

REVITALIZATION OF CORPS PROJECTS

- Would require substantial policy development and oversight
- Proposed a program for revitalization of existing Corps projects responsive to the Strategic Plan objectives

THE P&G AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION

- P&G not intended to encompass ecosystem restoration in the context of water resources projects
- No equivalent National policy statement for ecosystem restoration

THE P&G AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION - *Continued*

- **Congress limits ER to projects that:**
  - ***"contribute to the restoration of a nationally or regionally significant aquatic ecosystem that has become degraded as a result of a civil works project, or***
  - ***"to a restoration effort for which the Corps is otherwise uniquely well-suited (e.g., because the solution requires complex alterations to the hydrology and hydraulics of a river system)."***

RECONCILING FEDERAL FLOOD HAZARD MITIGATION PROGRAMS

- **The President's Budget for FY2004:**
  - ***"…despite major investments by the Corps, flood damages nationwide have been rising".***
  - ***"work more closely with other agencies to develop a coordinated federal approach"***
  - ***"give equal weight to non-structural approaches."***

RECONCILING FEDERAL FLOOD HAZARD MITIGATION PROGRAMS

Continued

- **OMB:**
  - ***"…broaden the Corps' approach [to] flood damage reduction***
  - ***"consider ways for the Corps to be more pro-active in preventing flood risks rather than reacting to them."***

RECONCILING FEDERAL FLOOD HAZARD MITIGATION PROGRAMS - *Continued*

- **Results:**
  - **Dual programs (Corps and FEMA) to achieve the same objectives through differing, and not necessarily complementary, approaches.**
  - **Reconciliation – not just coordination - of the Corps and FEMA programs is essential.**

COLLABORATIVE PLANNING

- Differentiations between "watershed planning" and "watershed approach" will require actionable policy.
- Need separate guidance for traditional projects and for ER projects.
- Guidance should be customized for each set

BUDGETARY IMPLICATIONS

- Budgetary constraints for first time in the Corps history
- Complicated by the adoption of the business program based budgeting process
- Issues extend beyond budgetary matters.
- Performance measures have met criticism by Appropriation Committees

BUDGETARY IMPLICATIONS
Continued

- **Feasible projects in line for construction funding are being screened on the basis of relative benefit to cost ratios**
- **However, individual projects are optimized on the basis of net benefits, not benefit to cost ratios.**

ORGANIZATIONAL DEFICIENCIES

- **Civil Works Policy and Policy Compliance Division mission statement includes no reference to developing and managing policies**
- **Policies governing the PMBP do not adequately provided for management of Civil Works policy**

THE HQ/IWR ROLES & INTERFACE

- In ER 10-1-23, the Institute's role in policy analysis and studies is not stated explicitly
- IWR has a largely inactive policy studies program
- HQ/field structure presents a serious challenge to the development, management and enforcement of policies

THE HQ/IWR ROLES and INTERFACE *Continued*

- Ad hoc, or “case-by-case”, policy may be ensuring inconsistency
- Present organizational structure not conducive to adequate administration of the Civil Works missions and programs.
- Imperative to look to IWR for substantial assistance to HQ
- Requires planning and formalization in close coordination with HQ
- Supporting role of IWR should include responsibility for developing policy

CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Critical need for resolution.**
- **Formalized, structured policy studies program is needed that:**
  - **involves and commits appropriate senior staff of HQ**
  - **takes advantage of the capabilities and expertise of the Institute for Water Resources**

CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS - *Continued*

- **Program would require that IWR have an established program and organizational element dedicated to policy studies**
- **HQ policy element would have to have a mission/function statement to support a closely coordinated program.**

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS *Continued*

- **Specified functions would enable and/or require IWR to:**
  - **Provide continual assessment of the status of Civil Works policies**
  - **Undertake perpetual updating and housekeeping of existing policies**
  - **Undertake policy studies referred from HQ**
  - **Initiate policy studies without referral from HQ**
  - **Transmit reports on all policy studies, with explicit recommendations for adoption through formal memoranda protocol**

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Continued

- **Recommend that Directorate of Civil Works convene a standing policy oversight team:**
  - **comprising the directors of the Civil Works Divisions and of IWR**
  - **to consider potential means for resolving present deficiencies**
  - **to establish a defined set of responsibilities and organizational structure.**

- Essayons!